



PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Business Community Focus Group Report

April 2003

This report contains an Executive Summary, as well as a detailed summary of the focus group discussion and a compilation of written responses to the comment sheets.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Introduction.

The City of Eugene hosted a two-hour forum with local employers and representatives of business, tourism, and economic interests at the Eugene Library on April 21, 2003. The purpose of the forum was to discuss the role that parks, recreation and open space has in the region's economy, and to build a strong and positive relationship between these critical community interests. Thirteen business leaders attended the workshop and gave valuable feedback. Mayor Jim Torrey opened the meeting, discussed his vision of increased tourism to our community via enhanced parks, open space, and recreational facilities and thanked participants for their time and input. Andrea Riner, City of Eugene Parks and Open Space Planning Manager provided a brief overview of the personal, social, environmental, and economic benefits of parks, recreation and open space, and then led the focus group discussion.

B. Participants

Bob Beban, *Eugene Emeralds Baseball Club*
John Brown, *Duncan & Brown Real Estate Analysts, Inc.*
Ron Craselneck, *Kidsports Board*
Doug Curry, *Burley Design*
Dave Hauser, *Eugene Chamber of Commerce*
Debbie Jeffries, *RiverRidge Golf Course*
Ric Jeffries, *RiverRidge Golf Course*
Jim Johnson, *Eugene Park Foundation*
Tom Orr, *Veralrud, Clark, Duvall & Orr Attorneys, and KidSports Board*
Kari Westlund, *CVALCO*
Gary Wildish, *Chambers Construction*
Curt Wilson, *WBGs Architects and KidSports Board*
Tom Wiper, *TLW Development, LLC*
Jim Torrey, *Mayor*
Nancy Nathanson, *City Councilor and PROS Comp Plan Committee Chair*
Angel Jones, *LRCS Director*
Renee Grube, *Recreation Service Director*
Tim Patrick, *Youth and Family Services Manager*
Andrea Riner, *POS Planning Manager*

Carrie Peterson, *Park Development Coordinator*
Beth Little, *Saturday Market* (comment sheet only)

C. Key Findings

Focus group participants discussed a variety of issues, including identifying local examples of parks, recreation, and open space that contribute to the economic health of the Eugene community, suggesting new ideas and directions, partnership models, and future priorities. Following are the key findings of the discussion and comment sheet responses:

- Participants agreed that parks, recreation, and open space **are great community assets** that provide economic benefit to Eugene's residents, employers, and business owners;
- Significant **local examples** exist, including the area's excellent botanical gardens, the extensive bike system and riverfront bike paths, the Ridgeline Trail, outstanding cultural facilities such as Hult and Cuthbert, and the Park Blocks that provide a setting for Saturday Market, Lane County Farmer's Market, and the Eugene Celebration;
- A recreational **niche market** for Eugene should be sought, which may include building a destination sports facility, such as a multi-sports complex and tournament locations to draw a regional or national audience;
- Local recreational and cultural **passions**, such as gymnastics, skateboarding, track and field, football, basketball, and baseball, should form the foundation of new ideas;
- Eugene already has a reputation as a healthy, active lifestyle community and opportunities exist to **"brand"** it, working with the business community;
- The business/recreation connection is a strong one that should be fostered by creating an **ongoing dialogue** with the business community to support parks and recreation;
- Eugene has a good track record with **partnerships**, and more can be developed by including Eugene In Common, other City departments, bicycle manufacturers and retailers, service clubs, area resorts, school districts, Kidsports, and other regional public partners;
- Business community leaders should be encouraged to **champion** the parks and recreation cause and serve as catalysts for further partnership efforts; and
- The overall city-wide approach to business should prioritize **superior customer service**, and promote a positive recreation-based approach to City and community leadership.

II. DISCUSSION

A detailed summary of the focus group comments follows.

Economic Benefits

- Natural and developed parks are great community asset
- Parks and open space draw tourists
- Providing market space and enhancing downtown residential retail areas;
- Special events and programs create economic opportunities;
- Cultural events at the Hult and Cuthbert bring people into the city

Local Examples

- Special parks, such as Hendricks, Rose Garden, and Skinner Butte;

- Bicycyle-oriented facilities, such as mountain bike paths, city bike system, and BMX facility;
- Trail system, including the Ridgeline Trail, Spencer Butte, and other recreational and multi-use trails;
- Cultural facilities, such as the Hult Center and Cuthbert Amphitheater;
- Recreational facilities, such as skateparks, Youth Sports Parks, and School Parks.
- Park blocks provide an excellent location for important Eugene activities and events, including Eugene Celebration, Saturday Market and Farmer's Market.
- Washington-Jefferson Park is well-suited for outdoor community celebrations, such as Fiesta Latina, as well as the recently initiated Latino Marketplace.

New Ideas

- Identify a recreational niche market for Eugene;
- Provide combined community- and school-based indoor recreation facilities to provide for activities during rainy weather;
- Build a destination sports facility, such as a multi-sports complex and tournament locations;
- Partner with Lane County and others to camping facilities adjacent to regional recreation amenities;
- Develop a unique recreational amenity that draws a regional or national audience, i.e., velodrome;
- Reclaim abandoned "brownfields" for recreation and open space uses;
- Look for opportunities to provide alternative, non-mainstream types of recreation to meet a variety of user types, i.e., skateboarding, rock climbing, ropes courses, challenge activities, extreme sports, youth camp activities;
- Identify local passions, such as gymnastics, skateboarding, track and field, football, basketball, and baseball, and build on those;
- Build energy around baseball centered on the regional draw of the Eugene Emeralds; and
- Work with the business community to "brand" Eugene as a healthy active lifestyle community.

Partnerships/New Models

- Create an ongoing dialogue with the business community to support parks and recreation;
- Pattern new partnerships based on success of the Eugene In Common program which includes the City of Eugene, Saturday Marke, Downtown Eugene, Inc., Lane County Farmers' Market and Downtown Events Management;
- Research successes and lessons-learned by Corvallis and their construction of a new ten-field soccer complex and Tualatin Hills and their multi-use Recreation Center;
- Forward a recreation-based community vision in other City departments, i.e., Planning, Public Safety, etc.

- Establish connections between recreational trails and bicycle manufacturers and retailers;
- Foster more park adoptions with service clubs to provide operations and maintenance support;
- Partner with ski resorts for mountain biking programs for off-season use;
- Continue partnerships with school districts and Kidsports for youth sports programs and facilities;
- Work more effectively with other regional public partners such as Willamalane, Lane County, and CVALCO;
- Identify and foster business community leaders as champions of parks and recreation; and
- Identify regional activities that draw tourists and look for companion activities and programs;
- Eugene Saturday Market
- Facilitate and lead various community entities interested in athletic complexes to increase the number of fields;
- Promote partnerships among various community agencies;

Priorities

- Adopt an overall and city-wide approach to business that prioritizes superior customer service;
- Recognize that the partnership model is the future direction for the City to work with area businesses and build expertise in this area;
- Look at adopting a more positive recreation-based approach to City and community leadership;
- Build parks, recreation, and open space into the identity of the community and the identity of the business community; and
- Be pro-active, recognizing that parks, recreation, and open space provide a strong community-building opportunity.

III. COMMENT SHEET RESULTS

All participants received a comment sheet and were encouraged to add any ideas or issues that might not have been discussed. In addition, several invited participants who were unable to attend mailed completed comment sheets. Following is a summary of these responses:

1. *In general, what are some of the ways that parks, recreation & open space can contribute to the economic health of a community?*

- The public marketplace is a historical model. If the public marketplace is set up in a way that other recreational uses of the park or space can co-exist, then the marketplace can prove viable and profitable. A key to this profitability is the ability to communicate the space's multiple uses..
- Facilitate and lead the various entities which are trying to build athletic complexes. Increase the number of fields and create partnerships between these folks, the community and businesses.

2. ***Name any specific components of Eugene's Parks, Recreation & Open Space program that provide particular economic benefits. If possible, provide examples of the types of businesses that may be involved.***
- Saturday Market pays a percentage of the fees collected from vendors for use of the Park Blocks. Our success is due to the relationships we have built with departments of the City, County and neighboring businesses
 - The Park Blocks serve the artist's community but also serves the farmers' market May through October. A developed park works well for a public marketplace because of the infrastructure. The park blocks have restrooms within one block, grey water drain and electricity, a mix of concrete, grass and well tended flower beds, and accessible parking and ramps for loading.
 - Eugene Celebration and Eugene in Common organizations are always looking for opportunities to program spaces with special events. Concerts and other community-based events, i.e. Earth Day, can provide income whether through permits and fees, percentages or through actual entry fees.
3. ***Are there other types of Parks, Recreation & Open Space facilities, programs and services that could be developed to provide additional economic benefits to the community?***
- I have been working with NEDCO to plan the Latino Marketplace that will take place at Washington Jefferson Park beginning May 4. Here is another model of a group that is trying to build an economic base through the marketplace model. It will allow flea market items, imported items and commercial goods. As the Saturday Market only allows handcrafted items, we are assured that the income stays in the area and reflects the community in the products we sell. These types of issues should be considered as the City decides when to use public spaces for economic benefit—that is—the goals of the use should be in tandem with the goals of the City.
 - We need more sports fields. There are a growing number of youth and adult sports providers and facilities are very limited. The need for indoor facilities as well as outdoor is critical and can be quantified. Economic benefits would follow since organized teams/leagues are income generators and in many cases job generators.
 - Near term: (from KidSports perspective) – We need more upkeep on fields (e.g. Graham Field) and we need more fields and facilities.
 - Long term: (from KidSports perspective) – I'd like to find ways to create more gym space for sports programs and the general public. For example, a 4 gym facility that would service neighborhoods and kids (kind of like the new school turf fields).
 - A major soccer/football field complex in Alton Baker Park (East). Think of traffic count on I-5. That alone would be an attraction to the area.

4. What are the important ways that Eugene's Business Community currently contributes to the provision of parks, recreation & open space services?

- The partnership that the City maintains with Eugene in Common (EIC), the permitting organization for downtown which includes the City of Eugene, Saturday Market, Downtown Eugene, Inc., Lane County Farmers' Market, and Downtown Events Management, Inc., is an excellent model of how partnerships can develop economic benefits. This organization permits the food booths, the markets, outdoor seating for restaurants, and other downtown events with an overall goal of providing a vibrant, active downtown in public spaces. These events then provide profitability for both the events and the businesses around the events. EIC is able to work with the businesses to make sure that they are really enhanced and not restricted in access to their customers.

5. Are there additional models for building a better relationship between the business community and our parks, recreation & open space system?

- The best models are the relationships between the individuals. When I am contacted by a business owner, Aster Publishing, for example, I need to respond quickly and effectively to their concerns. When the facilities crew tells me that we need to block off certain grassy areas until the re-seed, I need to work with my vendors and customers so they understand and comply. The Saturday Market succeeds because we do not live in a vacuum.
- Corvallis and their new ten field soccer complex
- Tualatin Hills Recreation Center in Hillsboro area.

6. Name any additional stakeholders who should be included in this discussion.

- Although I was unable to make the forum on April 20 due to a liability insurance audit, I hope to keep in the discussion of the economic viability of public spaces. The Eugene Saturday Market is a successful enterprise that depends upon use of a public space
- Mothers and fathers who recognize the need for better facilities and more of them.